

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 020972
ORIGIN NODS-00

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DRAFTED BY: S/S-O SESTEINER
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O 301543Z JAN 77 ZFF4
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T STATE 020972

NODIS

FOL TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM BEIRUT DTD 30 JAN 1977 QTE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 0380

NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LE, IS, US
SUBJECT: ASF DEPLOYMENT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

REF: STATE 20946

1. I CALLED ON FONMIN BOUTROS AT HIS HOME AT 1000 JAN 30 AND
PRESENTED POINTS PARA ONE REFTEL. BOUTROS TOOK VERY CAREFUL
NOTES OF MY PRESENTATION, AND EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR USG
COMMENTS. HE SAID HE WOULD BE CONSULTING URGENTLY WITH
PRESIDENT SARKIS TO SEE IF SOMETHING CAN BE WORKED OUT TO
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REDUCE TENSION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. BOUTROS SAID THAT
PRESIDENT SARKIS WOULD BE GOING TO DAMASCUS ON WEDNESDAY
FOR POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS WITH SYRIAN LEADERS AND WOULD
CONSULT WITH THEM ON THIS PROBLEM AFTER THE LEBANESE HAD
STUDIED IT AMONG THEMSELVES.

2. BOUTROS ASKED IF HIS PROPOSALS TO ISRAELI

GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN PASSED TO THEM. I REPLIED THAT THEY HAD, INCLUDING HIS REPORT TO ME THAT THERE WERE IN FACT NO REPEAT NO ASF FORCES IN NABAATIYAH ITSELF, BUT THAT WE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED A RESPONSE. BOUTROS REPEATED THAT THERE ARE NO ASF FORCES IN NABATIYAH AND SAID THAT ASF COMMANDER AL-HAJJ HAD ISSUED ORDERS THAT THERE WERE TO BE NO MOVEMENTS OR REINFORCEMENTS OF ANY ASF UNITS IN THE NABATIYAH AREA WITHOUT WRITTEN ORDERS FROM HIM. BOUTROS SAID THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ISRAELI REACTION TO HIS PROPOSALS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SINCE THEY WOULD BE IMPORTANT IN GOI CONSIDERATION OF WHAT FURTHER STEPS IT MIGHT TAKE TO REDUCE TENSIONS. I PROMISED TO PASS GOI REACTIONS TO HIM AS SOON AS I RECEIVED THEM.

3. BOUTROS PROMISED TO EXAMINE WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS, ASF COMMANDER AL-HAJJ AND OTHER APPROPRIATE MILITARY AUTHORITIES THE CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE SECURITY SITUATION IN THENABATIYAH AREA RELATIVE TO THE PRESENCE OF THE ASF TROOPS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE US WITH A MORE DETAILED ASSESSMENT AS REQUESTED.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH BOUTROS DID NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF FINDING SOME FORMULA THAT WOULD ENABLE THE SYRIAN ASF UNITS TO BE WITHDRAWN FROM THE NABATIYAH AREA AT SOME POINT, HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO THIS WITHOUT FIRST CONSULTING WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS AND RECEIVING THE ISRAELI REACTION TO HIS SUGGESTIONS ON HOW THE GOI COULD REDUCE THE ANXIETIES

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OF ITS PEOPLE. IT IS ALSO OBVIOUS THAT, EVEN IF THE LEBANESE WERE PREPARED TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO SUCH A FORMULA, THEY WOULD HAVE TO OBTAIN SYRIAN CONCURRENCE. BOUTROS IS WELL AWARE OF THE DIFFICULTIES SUCH A WITHDRAWAL POSES FOR THE ASAD GOVERNMENT UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

5. ON MILITARY SITUATION IN THE AREA, FRENCH MILATT HAS TOLD OUR DATT THAT WHEN HE TRAVELED FROM KFAR HUNI TO NABATIYAH ON JAN 26, HE FOUND ONE PLATOON-SIZED FORCE IN EACH VILLAGE BETWEEN KFAR HUNI AND KFAR TIBNIT (TOTAL OF ABOUT 10), EACH ACCOMPANIED BY ONE TANK, BUT NO REPEAT NO SYRIAN TROOPS IN NABATIYAH ITSELF.

6. WE ARE STRUCK BY RECENT INTELLIGENCE REPORTS OF INCREASED MILITARY ACTIVITY ALONG UDAYSAH - KFAR KILLA AXIS DURING PAST TEN DAYS, WHEN ASF WAS MOVING TO STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION THROUGHOUT LEBANON. ON JAN 21/22 CHRISTIAN

FORCES FROM QULAYAH, REPORTEDLY WITH ISRAELI SUPPORT, OCCUPIED THE VILLAGE OF UDAYSAH, TAKING SOME PALESTINIAN PRISONERS. AFTER ASF ADVANCED TO NABATIYAH AREA, CHRISTIAN FORCES, WITH ISRAELI SUPPORT IF NOT ENCOURAGEMENT, ATTACKED TEL LUBYAH, DAYR MIMAS AND KFAR KILLA. FATAH ATTEMPTS TO REINFORCE THEIR TROOPS IN THESE TOWNS WERE REPORTEDLY BLOCKED BY PRESENCE OF THE SYRIAN ASF POST AT KFAR TIBNIT. IF THESE REPORTS ARE TRUE, IT IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHY ISRAELIS WOULD WANT THE BLOCKING POST AT KFAR TIBNIT REMOVED UNLESS THEY ARE DELIBERATELY TRYING TO KEEP THE POT BOILING IN THIS AREA AND INCREASE CHRISTIAN DEPENDENCE ON THEM.

7. SUGGEST DEPT PASS DAMASCUS AND TEL AVIV.

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Message Attributes

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